

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19269

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, PGOV, TH, EFIN
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIMIN THANIN

REF: STATE 205766

SUMMARY: AS INSTRUCTED, CHARGE DISCUSSED WITH PRIME MINISTER THANIN ON AUGUST 30 THE UPCOMING TRIAL OF THE OCTOBER 6 DETAINEES, REFUGEES AND THE LABOR SITUATION. IN ADDITION, HE TOUCHED ON THE SIAM KRAFT CASE. THANIN INDICATED HE WOULD DISCUSS OUR POSITION WITH REGARD TO THE COURT CASES AND REFUGEES WITH THE CABINET. ON LABOR, THANIN WAS TYPICALLY UNYIELDING. WHILE NOT HAPPY ABOUT DISCUSSING SIAM KRAFT CASE HE DID INDICATE THAT HE WOULD HAVE THE MATTER LOOKED AT AGAIN WITHIN CONTEXT OF THE LAW.
END SUMMARY.

1. AS INSTRUCTED REFTTEL, CHARGE MET PRIVATELY WITH PRIME MINISTER THANIN FOR 30 MINUTES AFTER COURTESY CALL BY JUSTICE MARSHAL ON AUGUST 30. IN DISCUSSION, CHARGE, RAISED UPCOMING TRIAL OF OCTOBER 6 DETAINEES, THAI REFUGEE POLICY AND RTG ACTIONS AGAINST THAI LABOR UNIONS.

2. IN DISCUSSING MILITARY COURT TRIAL OF OCTOBER 6
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DETAINEES, CHARGE NOTED PREVIOUS ASSURANCES THAT STUDENTS WOULD RECEIVE A FAIR TRIAL. AT THE SAME TIME HE POINTED OUT THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH FACED OUTSIDERS IN PERCEIVING A MILITARY COURT TRIAL WITHOUT DEFENSE COUNSEL AS MEETING THAT STANDARD. CHARGE NOTED THIS WAS INTERNAL THAI MATTER BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, WE WANTED TO BE SURE THAT RTG UNDERSTOOD OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AND THE

PROBLEMS USE OF SUCH MILITARY COURT COULD CAUSE IN TERMS OF THAILAND'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND CONGRESSIONAL CONCERNS. FOR HIS PART, THE PRIMIN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINTS THE CHARGE HAD MADE AND SAID HE WOULD CONVEY AND DISCUSS OUR CONCERNS WITH THE CABINET.

3. ON REFUGEES, CHARGE POINTED OUT THAT ON BASIS OF OUR RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR THAI OFFICIALS, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE RTG IS EMBARKING ON A MORE RESTRICTIVE POLICY WITH REGARD TO REFUGEES AND ONE THAT COULD POSE THE DANGER OF FORCIBLE REPATRIATION. HE POINTED OUT OUR CONTINUED INTEREST IN THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, OUR PAST ACTIONS IN ASSISTING, INCLUDING MOST RECENT PAROLE ACTION WHICH WILL BENEFIT 10,000 REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND OUR RECENT OFFER TO DISCUSS WITH RTG ECONOMIC QUESTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY RESETTLEMENT. THANIN AVOIDED DIRECT SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT BUT PROMISED TO RAISE OUR POSITION WITH OTHER CABINET MEMBERS.

4. WHEN CHARGE RAISED OUR CONCERNS ABOUT RECENT RTG ACTIONS IN THE LABOR FIELD, THIS SPARKED IMMEDIATE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE FROM PRIMIN. HE SAID THAT RTG ACTIONS AGAINST UNIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR WERE IN FACT MOTIVATED BY EVIDENCE THAT THERE WERE COMMUNISTS COVERTLY INVOLVED. CONSEQUENTLY THE THAI GOVERNMENT FELT THAT THEY HAD TO TAKE THESE ACTIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY. FURTHER, RTG WAS PLANNING TO PROTECT RIGHTS OF PUBLIC WORKERS THROUGH LEGISLATION NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION. CHARGE
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REITERATED OUR BASIC INTEREST IN FREE LABOR MOVEMENT AS WELL AS PARTICULAR ROLE OF THE AFL AND ITS AAFI OFFICE HERE. THANIN'S REACTION WAS TO ASK THAT USG UNDERTAKE TO SUPPLY INFORMATION "FROM OUR OWN SOURCES", IF RTG'S WORD IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH, TO DEMONSTRATE TO AFL VALIDITY OF RTG'S POSITION ON NON-RECOGNITION OF THE UNIONS BECAUSE OF COMMUNIST INVOLVEMENT. CHARGE ONCE AGAIN POINTED OUT THAT HE UNDER INSTRUCTIONS AND HE WANTED THE PRIME MINISTER TO KNOW OF OUR CONCERNS IN THE LABOR AREA AS HE HAD OUTLINED. THANIN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD BUT ASKED THAT HIS VIEWS BE CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON.

5. CHARGE ALSO TOUCHED ON SIAM KRAFT CASE AND LATEST DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THAT. PRIMIN WAS OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY AND SENSITIVE ABOUT THIS ISSUE. HE INDICATED COURT JUDGMENT WOULD STAND AND THE COMPANY WOULD HAVE TO PAY THE FINE. AT THE SAME TIME HE SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE "THOSE DIRECTLY INVOLVED" LOOK AT THIS CASE ONCE MORE TO SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE, BUT ONLY "WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE THAI LAW."

6. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSE WITH REGARD TO APPROACHES ON THE MILITARY COURT TRIALS AND REFUGEES WAS ABOUT

WHAT WE EXPECTED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE HAS GOTTEN FROM BOTH THAI GOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER DIPLOMATIC SOURCES SIMILAR APPROACHES ON THE MILITARY COURT TRIALS. IN ADDITION, MFA HAS TOLD US THAT FONMIN HAS TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY OAKLEY'S APPROACH REPORTED REFTEL.

7. PRIMIN IS ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT LEADERS MOST EMOTIONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INFLOW OF REFUGEES. AT A MINIMUM HE IS NOW PERSONALLY AWARE OF OUR CONCERNS AND CHARGE WILL FOLLOW-UP DURING WEEK WITH SAMAK AND MFA.

8. AS OBVIOUS FROM ABOVE DESCRIPTION, DISCUSSION ON LABOR SITUATION AND AAFLI WAS A DIALOGUE OF THE DEAF. PRIMIN IS RIGIDLY AND EMOTIONALLY INFLEXIBLE ON THIS ISSUE. CONFIDENTIAL

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CHARG'S CONVERSATION WAS ONE FURTHER PROOF OF THAT POINT. AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL HAVE A SECOND CHANCE WITH SAMAK TO MAKE OUR POINTS FOR WHATEVER EFFECT THEY MIGHT HAVE.

9. BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND SIAM KRAFT COMPANY ARE IN THE MIDST OF SERIOUS STUDY OF THE CASE. THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT THIS WILL BE RAISED AT NEXT CABINET MEETING AND OUR APPROACH WAS TIMELY REMINDER TO THE PRIMIN OF OUR INTEREST. AT THE SAME TIME IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT WE HAVE COME TO THE END OF THE STRING IN DEALING WITH HIM PERSONALLY ON THIS ISSUE. O'DONOHUE

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